

Description

HAT CONTAINER

BACKGROUND OF INVENTION

[0001] The present invention relates to the field of containers that can be used to store, hold, contain or transport hats, such as baseball caps or visors.

[0002] It is known to store, hold, contain or transport hats in containers and a wide variety of containers are available for a wide variety of hats. In these containers, hats are usually stacked one upon another to maximize the use of space. However, billed hats, which can include baseball caps and visors, pose a special challenge for both storage and transportation. Because of their unique design, these hats cannot easily be stacked without being deformed, crushed and often irreversibly damaged.

[0003] Billed hats are commonly made of a bill portion and a crown portion. The bill portion has a generally convex shape and is usually relatively stiff because it is commonly made of material such as fabric-covered cardboard. However, even though the bill portion can be relatively stiff, it

can still be crushed and deformed by improper storage and transportation. The crown portion of a billed hat is usually fairly supple because it is made of material that is usually not reinforced. The deformation and crushing that can result from improper storage and transportation of billed hats can greatly reduce the aesthetic appearance and value of these types of hats.

[0004] Often, billed hats are stored in an overlapping array. To create the overlapping array, the rear half of the crown of a billed hat is pushed inward towards the front half of the crown, and the hat is stacked onto another similarly folded hat. However, even though some partial protection can be obtained for the bill portion of the hats in such an overlapping array, the crown portion is often crushed.

[0005] There is needed a container that will protect the shape of billed hats during storage and transportation. It would be advantageous to be able to easily and safely transport a plurality of billed hats such as baseball caps or visors to different locations without damage to the hats. This would be particularly advantageous for salespeople who wish to transport these types of hat for sale or display at different locations.

SUMMARY OF INVENTION

[0006] The present invention discloses a hat container that can be used to store, hold, contain or transport a plurality of billed hats. To reduce the possibility that hats will become crushed or deformed or otherwise damaged during storage or transportation within the hat container of the present invention and to minimize its size, the container can be made to resemble and complement the shape of billed hats.

[0007] In one aspect, the invention is a hat container for holding a plurality of stacked billed hats comprising a bill portion, a crown portion, a door pivotally connected to said crown portion, a stabilizer and a closure, wherein the bill and crown portions and the door define an internal cavity, comprising a bottom surface, a top surface and sides, that can accept the plurality of stacked billed hats.

[0008] In one embodiment, the hat container comprises a convex shape-retaining element. In one embodiment, the door of the hat container comprises a concave depression. In one embodiment, the hat container comprises a loop for hanging or carrying the hat container. In one embodiment, the stabilizer is a rim extending from the edge of the door of the hat container and in one embodiment the stabilizer prevents water from entering the internal cavity.

In one embodiment, the closure is a latch.

[0009] In another aspect, this invention is a hat container for holding a plurality of stacked billed hats comprising a bill portion, a crown portion, a door pivotally connected to said crown portion, a closure, and a convex shape-retaining element, wherein the bill and crown portions and the door define an internal cavity, comprising a bottom surface, a top surface and sides, that can accept the plurality of stacked billed hats.

[0010] In one embodiment, the door comprises a concave depression. In one embodiment, the hat container comprises a loop for hanging or carrying the hat container. In one embodiment, the door comprises a stabilizer. In one embodiment, the stabilizer is a rim extending from the edge of the door, and, in one embodiment, the stabilizer prevents water from entering the internal cavity. In one embodiment, the closure of the hat container is a latch.

[0011] In another aspect, this invention is a hat container for holding a plurality of stacked billed hats comprising a bill portion, a crown portion, a door pivotally connected to said crown portion, a closure, and a stabilizer, wherein the bill and crown portions and the door define an internal cavity, comprising a bottom surface, a top surface and

sides, that can accept the plurality of stacked billed hats, and wherein said door comprises a concave depression.

[0012] In one embodiment, the hat container further comprises a convex shape-retaining element. In one embodiment, the hat container further comprises a loop for hanging or carrying the hat container. In one embodiment, the door further comprises a stabilizer. In one embodiment, the stabilizer is a rim extending from the edge of the door, and, in one embodiment, the stabilizer prevents water from entering the internal cavity. In one embodiment, the closure of the hat container is a latch.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF DRAWINGS

[0013] The present invention, both as to its organization and manner of operation, may best be understood by reference to the following description, and the accompanying drawings, wherein like reference numerals are used throughout the several views, and, in which:

[0014] FIG. 1 is a perspective view of an embodiment of the hat container of this invention.

[0015] FIG. 2A is a side plan view of a baseball cap.

[0016] FIG. 2B is a side plan view of a visor.

[0017] FIG. 2C is a side plan view of a baseball cap with the back

portion thereof folded into the front portion of the cap.

[0018] FIG. 2D is a side plan view of a visor with the back portion thereof folded into the front portion of the visor.

[0019] FIG. 3 is a perspective view of the hat container of FIG. 1 with its door opened.

[0020] FIG. 4A is a side plan view of the hat container of FIG. 1.

[0021] FIG. 4B is a top plan view of the hat container of FIG. 1.

[0022] FIG. 5A is a rear plan view of the door of the hat container of FIG. 1.

[0023] FIG. 5B is a side plan cut-away view of the latch of the door shown in FIG. 4B.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

[0024] An embodiment of a hat container 1 of the present invention is illustrated in FIGS. 1–5. In this embodiment, the hat container includes a bill portion 2, a crown portion 3, and a door 4.

[0025] Hat container 1 is used to store, hold, contain or transport billed hats to help maintain the shape of such hats and prevent them from becoming crushed and deformed or otherwise damaged. A "billed hat" as used herein includes a baseball cap type hat, a visor, and such other type of hat known to those in the art. A wide variety of different billed

hats are known, including baseball caps and visors, which can vary widely in shape and design. As is apparent, dimensions 5, 6, 7 and 8 can be varied to accommodate both the shape of the billed hat, as well as the number of hats to be inserted into the container. For example, in one embodiment, the hat container can be proportioned to accept a plurality of baseball caps, while in another embodiment, the container can be proportioned to accept a plurality of visors or other types of billed hats.

[0026] To help prevent the crushing and deformation of billed hats, hat container 1 is made from a rigid or semi-rigid material. A "rigid or semi-rigid material", as used herein, includes materials that cannot easily be crushed or deformed, such as plastics or other polymeric compositions, for example acrylics. In one embodiment of this invention, the hat container is made from plastic, such as, for example, polyvinyl chloride. Bill portion 2, crown portion 3 and door 4 can be made of the same or different materials, or have the same or different physical characteristics.

[0027] As shown in FIG. 2A, a baseball cap 9 generally comprises a bill 10 and a crown-engaging member 11. Like baseball caps, a visor 12 comprises a bill 10 and a smaller crown-engaging member 11, as shown in FIG. 2B. To facilitate

the storage and transportation of a plurality of billed hats, it is known to stack such hats in an overlapping array.

"Stacked billed hats", as used herein, means billed hats where the back portion of the crown-engaging member of each hat is folded into the front portion of the crown-engaging member, so that the hats can be placed one on top of another in an overlapping array. As shown in FIG. 2C for baseball caps, back portion 15 of the crown-engaging member is folded into front portion 16. Similarly for visors, as shown in FIG. 2D, back portion 15 of the crown-engaging member can be folded into front portion 16.

[0028] Bill portion 2, crown portion 3 and door 4 define internal cavity 19, which comprises a bottom surface, a top surface and sides in hat container 1. Billed hats are inserted into hat container 1 in an overlapping array, as described above. As shown in FIG. 3, billed hats can be easily inserted into or removed from internal cavity 19 of the hat container, by opening door 4.

[0029] Hat container 1 may comprise shape-retaining element 20. Shape-retaining element 20 can adopt a relatively convex shape of varying degree, and functions to help to preserve the shape of the billed hats during storage or

transportation, by complementing their shape. The shape-retaining element may also ease the insertion and removal of billed hats into or from the container. It is desirable that shape-retaining element 20 spans the entire length of internal cavity 19, and, as such, spans bill portion 2, crown portion 3 and door 4.

[0030] Bill portion 2 of the hat container can have a relatively convex conformation that can function to help preserve the relatively convex shape of the bill of the stacked billed hats by complementing their shape. In one embodiment of this invention, both the bottom and top surfaces of bill portion 2 can adopt a convex conformation to better conform to the shape of a bill and better protect against crushing and deformation during storage and transportation. The bill portion can be made from a rigid or semi-rigid material that will resist crushing and deformation, which may or may not be an identical material to that used for the remainder of the hat container.

[0031] Door 4 of the hat container is pivotally connected to crown portion 3 of hat container 1. As is apparent, this can be accomplished using a variety of connecting methods. For example, door 4 can be pivotally connected to the crown portion through the use of hinges 21, as shown

in FIGS. 1, 3 and 4. This hinge may be a snap-type hinge as shown in FIGS. 1, 3 and 4, a conventional plate-like hinge that is mounted onto the hat container, as by screws, or other type of pivoting connection, as is known to those of skill in the art.

[0032] Hat container 1 preferably comprises stabilizer 27, as shown in FIGS. 1, 3, 4 and 5. In one embodiment of this invention, stabilizer 27 can take the form of a rim that extends around all of, or a portion of, the edge of door 4, such that it lies, when hat container 1 is closed, relatively snugly on the exterior surface of crown portion 3 of hat container 1. As is apparent, the stabilizer may also be on the crown portion, such that when the hat container is closed, it lies relatively snugly on the exterior surface of door 4 of hat container 1. Stabilizer 27 can serve many functions, such as, for example, providing for stability and resistance against torsional forces, which might otherwise cause door 4 to move to an opened position and thereby permit the billed hats contained therein to fall out of the hat container. Alternately or in addition, the stabilizer can provide some impact-resistance to the hat container by preventing door 4 from suddenly opening due to impact and releasing the contents. In one embodiment, stabilizer

27 is a rim, which may additionally be used to provide protection against water damage, by sealing inside cavity 19 from the outside environment as by with a foam liner disposed between crown portion 3 and the rim, and offering protection for the billed hats.

[0033] Door 4 is secured in a closed position, which position is shown in FIG. 1, by a closure 22. As is apparent, there are a variety of different closures that can be used to hold door 4 in a closed position, such as, for example, latches and/or catches or other reversible locking mechanisms. In one embodiment, as shown in FIGS. 1 and 5B, closure 22 comprises a catch 23, which can reversibly engage protrusion 24, located on the underside of lip 25. In another embodiment, door 4 could be held in a closed position through the use of friction, if a compressible liner, such as one made of foam or other equivalent material known to those of skill of the art is positioned between the stabilizer of door 4 and crown portion 3, and is compressed sufficiently to maintain the door in a closed position. The liner may be on the door, the crown portion or both.

[0034] Door 4 may comprise concave depression 26, which functions to preserve the shape of the hats inserted into the container. Concave depression 26 can serve to keep the

hats in the configuration required to create an overlapping array, where the back portion of the crown is folded into the front portion. The concave depression can also serve many other functions depending on its size, such as reducing movement of hats in the container during transport, which could result in damage to the hats.

[0035] In one embodiment, hat container 1 comprises loop 28 for hanging or carrying. The loop can be made from a variety of materials, including rigid (*i.e.*, plastic or other polymers) and flexible (*i.e.*, nylon) materials. Loop 28 for hanging or carrying can be attached in a variety of ways to hat container 1. In one embodiment, the loop is inserted into door 4 through slots 29, and it can be pushed into cavity 19 when not needed.

[0036] While the invention has been described in conjunction with the disclosed embodiments, it will be understood that the invention is not intended to be limited to these embodiments. On the contrary, the invention is intended to cover alternatives, modifications and equivalents, which may be included within the spirit and scope of the invention. Various modifications will remain readily apparent to those skilled in the art, since the generic principles of the present invention have been defined herein specifically to

describe hat containers that can be used to hold, store, contain and transport billed hats without the hats being crushed or deformed.